

Remarks on Hurricane Katrina Recovery Efforts and an Exchange With
Reporters in Baker, Louisiana
September 5, 2005

The President. Listen, Laura and I have come back down to Louisiana, and then we're going over to Mississippi to let the good people of this region know there's a lot of work to be done, and we're going to continue working with the local and State people to get it done.

The first mission, of course, is to save lives. And so long as any life is in danger, we've got work to do, and they're going to continue to save lives, whether it be in New Orleans or the surrounding parishes or up and down the coast of Mississippi.

Secondly, we can help save lives once a person finds a shelter such as this. That means getting people food and water and medicine and help and in a place like this, love.

I want to thank the pastor for having us. I want to thank my friend T.D. Jakes for rallying the armies of compassion to help somebody like the mayor.

The response of this country to—has been amazing. But T.D. tells me about church family members of his who have adopted 20 people of the—from New Orleans. The pastor here has got his gymnasiums full of families, and volunteers are now responding to help the families. I want to thank every family member who's helping somebody who has been displaced. I want to thank every church member who's helping people who are displaced—who have been displaced.

America can be proud of the efforts of the churches and synagogues and mosques and community organizations that are helping these people. And this is a long-term project, to help these people. And this country is going to be committed to doing what it takes to help people get back on their feet. And that's why I've come back to this State, and that's why I'm going to Mississippi.

Again, I want to thank the pastor. The response of this church is indicative of the response of many around this Nation, and I mean cities big and cities small, families with, you know, who have got a lot of money and families with little money, all opening their arms to a brother and sister in need.

And again, I want to thank you, pastor. Thank you, T.D., for helping to call people to action. I want to thank the mayor, thank the folks of Louisiana. We've got a lot of work to do, and that's why I'm here to tell people, we'll get it done.

Thank you all.

Q. [Inaudible]—does the Government have—

Ongoing Relief Efforts

The President. So long as anybody's life is in danger, we've got work to do. That's why I want people to be assured we're going to do it. And—but remember, this is a project that not only deals with the immediate; we're going to have to deal with the long term as well. The immediate needs are being taken care of right here, and I fully understand there's a lot of work to be done.

Q. [Inaudible]—the Federal Government doing the best it can now?

The President. I think all levels of Government are doing the best they can. If it's not going right, we'll make it right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the evacuee shelter at the Bethany World Prayer Center. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Stockstill, senior pastor, Bethany World Prayer Center; Bishop Thomas D. Jakes, Sr., chief executive officer, The Potter's House of Dallas, Inc., Dallas, TX; and Mayor Melvin L. "Kip" Holden of Baton Rouge, LA.

Remarks at the Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana September 5, 2005

First of all, thanks for doing your duty. You've faced one of the greatest challenges our country has ever faced. As a result of your compassion and your hard work and your dedication, a lot of people's lives were saved, and I want to thank you for that. I hope that makes you feel good, to know that you helped save life.

We've got a lot of work to do. I told the Governor and the Senators and the Congress people, I said, "You know, if it's not right, we're going to fix it, and if it is right, we're going to keep doing it." And this is just the beginning of a huge effort to—and we're going to continue to save life. But you've got to know that lives are still being saved as we speak because thousands of people are taking in these displaced souls, in their homes and churches

and synagogues and mosques and providing love and compassion and food.

This is one of these disasters that will test our soul and test our spirit. And—but we're going to show the world, once again, that not only we will survive, but that we will be stronger and better for it when it's all said and done, that amidst this darkness, there is light. And I want to thank you all for providing light, immediate light to people who needed help. You make your State and your local governments and your country proud.

God bless you and your families. May God bless the victims, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana.

Remarks to the Community in Poplarville, Mississippi September 5, 2005

[*The President's remarks are joined in progress.*]

—out of this despair is going to come a vibrant coast. It's—again, I understand if you're saying to yourself, "Well, it's hard for me to realize what George W. is saying, because I've seen the rubble and I know what has happened to my neighbors." But I'd like to come back down here in about 2 years and walk your streets and see how vital this part of the world is going to be.

I can't wait to join you in the joy of welcoming neighbors back into neighborhoods, and small businesses up and running, and cutting those ribbons that somebody is creating new jobs. That's what I think is going to happen.

I just want you to know that when I'm thinking about how we can help this part of the world, Mississippi is on my mind. Mississippi is a part of the future of this country, and part of that future is to help you get back up on your feet. And I'm confident that your United States Senator Trent Lott, if I don't say it loud enough, he will. [*Laughter*] He'll remind us. But I appreciate you taking time out of your day.

And by the way, I'm traveling with good company. My wife, Laura, is with me too.

Let me conclude by asking for God's blessings on you all and your families and friends, and let you know we're here for the long term. I understand. I understand the damage. I understand the devastation.